



URBAN WITHDRAWAL



Study: Residents left big metros during pandemic for family

Homes, in suburban Salt Lake City, are shown on April 13, 2019.

Associated Press
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Sharing Menu \$50 per couple



2 appetizers



1 Main dish



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Study: Residents left big metros during pandemic for family

From Front

By **MIKE SCHNEIDER**
Associated Press

Cece Linder was living in a 770-square-foot apartment outside Washington, D.C., last spring when the area went into lockdown because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In May 2020, after a few months of both living and working in the small space, Linder decided to leave the capital area and move into the 2,000-square-foot (186-square-meter) beachside home she jointly owns with her parents in Cocoa Beach, Florida. Now she gets to see the sunrise over the water each morning before work.

"If I'm teleworking anyway, why not move to this other place that is more visually attractive, it's beachside, and someone can occasionally cook for me?" Linder said. "Though that didn't exactly work out. My



People walk on the street, Monday, April 26, 2021 in New York.

mom has me cooking for them."

Linder was not alone in her thinking. According to a new study and data from the U.S. Census Bureau, she was one of thousands of people who migrated out of the nation's largest metropolitan areas and

into smaller ones during the pandemic.

The study found that, like Linder, many of the migrants weren't driven by new jobs or weather — or even a fear of the virus — but a desire to be closer to family and a freedom to make it happen because of

Associated Press

remote working. Although the pattern of people moving from larger to smaller cities has been going on for several years, the pandemic exacerbated that trend, said Peter Haslag of Vanderbilt University, who conducted the study on migrant motivations with Daniel Weagley of Georgia Tech. Their paper has not yet been published.

The data adds to understanding of how the pandemic has changed where and how Americans live. The moves were most common among those with higher incomes and more job flexibility. If the trends continue, it could have long-term implications for real estate markets, tax bases and the wealth inequality in cities, according to researchers.

"For us, the question is, is this a temporary blip or is it going to continue?" Haslag said. "If work-from-home really is going to be a factor in job and company decisions, and by allowing work and location to be separate decisions, people are going to be able to optimize their locations, if they

have the right jobs."

The Census Bureau data shows that the New York metro area — which was hit early by the new coronavirus — declined by about 108,000 residents, or 0.5%. Roughly 216,000 residents moved out of the metropolitan area, but the natural increase from births and gains in international migration offset the departures. The New York metro area has experienced decelerated growth over the past several years, but last year's decline was a bigger bite of the Big Apple than in 2019, when it lost 60,000 residents. The nation's next largest metro areas — Los Angeles and Chicago — also experienced greater population declines last year compared to the previous year: around 0.5% last year compared to 0.3% in 2019 for both metros. San Francisco also had a drop of around 0.5% last year compared to a 0.1% gain in 2019. "I think some core urban counties like Manhattan, San Francisco and others may have taken a bigger brunt of pandemic-related out-movement, as well as lower immigration," said William Frey, a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution. "Overall, it was a year of slow growth with selective movement out of some urban centers."

Smaller metros in the Sun Belt and West, several with large communities of vacation homes, saw the biggest population gains last year, mostly driven by migration. Led by the Florida retirement community The Villages, the metros seeing population increases between 3% and 4% included St. George, Utah; Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; Austin, Texas; and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. □



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Federal judge strikes down CDC eviction moratorium

By MICHAEL CASEY

Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A federal judge ruled Wednesday that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention exceeded its authority when it imposed a federal eviction moratorium.

The Justice Department said it would appeal the ruling from the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., meaning there won't likely be any immediate impact on the ban, which in March was extended through the end of June.

Opponents of the moratorium, including the National Association of Realtors, welcomed the decision and said the solution was rental assistance, not a ban on evictions.

"This prevents two crises — one for tenants, and one for mom-and-pop housing providers who do not have a reprieve from their bills," the president of the realtors association, Charlie Oppler, said in a statement. "With rental assistance secured, the economy strengthening, and unemployment rates falling, there is no need to continue a blanket, nationwide eviction ban."

The Alabama and Georgia associations of realtors were among the plaintiffs in the case.

The eviction ban, initially put in place last year, pro-



In this Jan. 13, 2021, file photo tenants' rights advocates demonstrate outside the JFK federal building in Boston.

vides protection for renters out of concern that having families lose their homes and move into shelters or share crowded conditions with relatives or friends during the pandemic would further spread the highly contagious virus.

Proponents of the ban argue it is necessary since the pandemic is still a threat and so many people are at risk of eviction or foreclosure. Nearly 4 million people in the U.S. said they faced eviction or foreclosure in the next two months, according to the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.

The eviction moratorium "protects many renters who cannot make their monthly payments due to job loss or health care expenses," Brian M. Boynton, acting assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Civil Division, said in a statement announcing the department's decision to appeal the court ruling.

"Scientific evidence shows that evictions exacerbate the spread of COVID-19, which has already killed more than half a million Americans, and the harm to the public that would result from unchecked evictions cannot be undone,"

he added.

Congress has allocated more than \$45 billion in rental assistance, but much of that hasn't reached needy tenants.

Eric Dunn, the director of litigation for the National Housing Law Project, said most of the rent relief programs only started in late March and early April. "It feels like the pandemic, at least in the U.S., is coming to an end but it's not over yet. If we have a wave of mass evictions, it could really set us back."

The ruling Wednesday is just the latest court decision on the moratorium.

Landlords in several states have sued to scrap the order, arguing it was causing them financial hardship and infringing on their property rights. They remain opposed to any extension, saying it does nothing to address the financial challenges facing renters and landlords.

There are at least six prominent lawsuits challenging the authority of the CDC ban. So far, three judges have sided with the ban and three have ruled against, with all cases currently going through appeals. One judge in Memphis declared the CDC order unenforceable in the entire Western District of Tennessee.

Dunn worries that the sweeping nature of this ruling — which clearly states that it applies nationally — could embolden landlords in some states to push ahead with evictions.

"Just practically there could be some landlords that maybe thought the prior decision didn't apply to them or they couldn't rely on those and may choose to rely on this one," he said. "There could be some broader effect for that reason, but I think technically it's still the same. None of the federal court decisions are binding on state court judges that actually hear eviction cases." □

Utah affirms transgender right to change birth certificates

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Utah Supreme Court affirmed the right of transgender people to change their sex designation on birth certificates Thursday, a ruling that came as a bright spot for advocates amid a wave of legislation targeting transgender people around the country.

Several states have passed bills banning transgender youth from sports teams that match their gender identity, and one, Arkansas, has blocked gender-confirming healthcare

for youth. Every U.S. state except Tennessee allows people to change their gender markers on birth certificates, though Montana lawmakers this year added a requirement for people to have surgery beforehand.

For transgender people, having a driver's license or identification with "the wrong gender marker on it can force a transgender person to out themselves on a daily basis, putting them at risk for ridicule, discrimination and violence," the group Transgender Education Advocates of Utah

said in a statement.

The decision came after two people, Angie Rice and Sean Childers-Gray, were denied sex-designation changes by a Utah judge who said it was unclear whether he had the authority to approve it.

They came before the high court in 2018, pointing out that many other judges in the state had routinely granted them. The state did not fight their lawsuit.

The ruling removed legal ambiguity, clarifying that people do have the "common-law right" to change their sex designations, and



Sean Childers-Gray speaks at a press conference Thursday, May 6, 2021, in Salt Lake City, after the Utah Supreme Court ruled in his favor that allowed him and other transgender people to list the sex to which they identify with on their driver's licenses and other state records.

Associated Press

Rice and Childers-Gray had met those requirements.

"This is a landmark victory for transgender Utahns," said Troy Williams, executive director of the group

Equality Utah, who also celebrated the rejection of two legislative bills targeting transgender youth. "This is what 'equality under the law' looks like." □

Shooting at Idaho middle school injures 3; student captured

By **REBECCA BOONE**

Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A shooting at an eastern Idaho middle school Thursday injured two students and a custodian, and a student was taken into custody, authorities said.

The victims' injuries were not believed to be life-threatening, Jefferson County Sheriff Steve Anderson said.

Police were called to the school around 9:15 a.m. after students and staffers heard gunfire. Multiple law enforcement agencies responded, and students were evacuated to a nearby high school to be reunited with their parents.

"Me and my classmate were just in class with our teacher — we were doing work — and then all of a sudden, here was a loud noise and then there were two more loud noises. Then there was screaming," 12-year-old Yandel Rodriguez said. "Our teacher went to check it out, and he found blood."

Yandel's mom, Adela Rodriguez, said they were OK but "still a little shaky" from the shooting as they left the campus.

"Today we had the worst nightmare a school district could encounter. We had a school shooting here at Rigby Middle School," Jef-



Police tape marks a line outside Rigby Middle School following a shooting there earlier Thursday, May 6, 2021, in Rigby, Idaho.

erson School District Superintendent Chad Martin said. "What we know so far is the shooter has been apprehended. There is no further threat to the students." Bonneville County sheriff's Sgt. Bryan Lovell said an investigation was underway and no additional information was immediately available. A news conference was scheduled for 4 p.m. Rigby is a small city about 95 miles (145 kilometers) southwest of Yellowstone National Park. Rigby Middle School has about 1,500 students in sixth through eighth grades, according

to the National Center for Education Statistics.

"I am praying for the lives and safety of those involved in today's tragic events," Gov. Brad Little said in a prepared statement. "Thank you to our law enforcement agencies and school leaders for their efforts in responding to the incident."

Police tape surrounded the middle school, and small evidence markers were placed next to spots of blood on the ground. Investigators interviewed faculty and staffers individually.

Lucy Long, a sixth-grader

at Rigby Middle School, told the Post Register newspaper in Idaho Falls that her classroom went into lockdown after they heard gunshots, with lights and computers turned off and students lined up against the wall.

Lucy comforted her friends and began recording on her phone, so police would know what happened if the shooter came in. The audio contained mostly whispers, with one sentence audible: "It's real," one student said. Lucy said she saw blood on the hallway floor when police escorted them out of

the classroom. The shooter was quickly apprehended, and the three injured people were taken to a hospital by ambulance, Central Fire Chief Carl Anderson said.

The president of the Idaho Education Association, Layne McInelly, said the union was ready to provide whatever support school staffers, students and the community needs.

"We send positive thoughts to the victims of this tragic incident and hope for their full and rapid recovery. Patience will need to be at a premium while school officials and law enforcement agencies investigate the situation," McInelly said in a statement.

The attack appears to be Idaho's second school shooting. In 1999, a student at a high school in Notus fired a shotgun several times. No one was struck by the gunfire, but one student was injured by ricocheting debris from the first shell.

In 1989, a student at Rigby Junior High pulled a gun, threatened a teacher and students, and took a 14-year-old girl hostage, according to a Deseret News report. Police safely rescued the hostage from a nearby church about an hour later and took the teen into custody. No one was shot in that incident. □

Associated Press

Ex-health chief: Docs wrote excessive opioid prescriptions



Huntington Mayor Steve Williams, left, and lawyer Rusty Webb enter the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse in Charleston, W. Va., Monday, May 3, 2021, for the start of the opioid trial.

Associated Press

By **CUNEY DIL**

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia's former health commissioner described a culture of doctors for years writing more

opioid prescriptions for their patients than necessary in a landmark trial in which local governments accuse three large drug distributors of fueling the U.S. opioid epidemic.

Dr. Rahul Gupta testified Thursday that doctors had a "culture of attempting to reduce pain to a level of zero for every American, for every West Virginian."

The "intent was good — for good doctors. But because of that intent, they wrote prescriptions" for longer than needed, he added. "The bad doctors are writing regularly and ritually a large amount of prescriptions." It was the fourth day of the trial in Charleston, and it featured cross-examination of witnesses from defense attorneys and testimony from a quick emergency response worker who treats overdoses in Huntington.

Similar lawsuits have resulted in multimillion-dollar settlements, but this is the first time allegations have wound up at federal trial. The result could have huge effects on hundreds of similar lawsuits that have been filed across the country.

Cabell County and the city of Huntington argue that drug distributors AmersourceBergen Drug Co., Cardinal Health Inc. and McKesson Corp created a "public nuisance" by flooding the area with 80 million opioid doses over eight years and ignoring the signs that the community was being ravaged by addiction. Attorneys for the companies attempted to show

that West Virginia may have had a higher need for the opioid painkillers than other areas, owing to the state's aging population and the many workers in coal mining and industrial sectors. They questioned Gupta on the witness stand for several hours.

They also addressed the issue of opioid withdrawal afflicting infants whose mothers were using opioids during pregnancy. Timothy Hester, an attorney for McKesson Corp., said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention never ruled out the use of opioid prescriptions for pregnant women, even as it urged caution. □

France sends patrol boats as fishing tensions flare with U.K.

By JILL LAWLESS and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Vessels from Britain's Royal Navy and French police boats patrolled Thursday near the English Channel island of Jersey, where French fishermen angry about losing access to its waters gathered for a maritime protest. The irate mariners set off flares and entered the island's main harbor, in the first major dispute between France and Britain over fishing rights in the wake of Brexit.

The European Union appealed for calm, but also accused the U.K. of not respecting the terms of the post-Brexit trade deal agreed to by the two sides. The naval policing boats Athos, which has a large machine gun on its front deck, and the unarmed Themis were sent to keep watch on waters between France and Jersey, French maritime authorities for the English Channel and North Sea said. The deployment came after Britain on Wednesday directed two naval vessels, HMS Severn and HMS Tamar, to also patrol the waters around the island, a self-governing British Crown Dependency near the coast of northern



Fishing vessels at sea off the coast of Jersey, Thursday, May 6, 2021.

Associated Press

France. French fishermen steamed into Jersey waters to demonstrate against new post-Brexit rules requiring them to submit their past fishing activities in order to receive a license to continue operating in the island's waters. French fishing communities say some boats that have operated around Jersey for years have suddenly had their access restricted.

Dimitri Rogoff, who heads a grouping of fishermen, said about 50 boats from French

ports along the western Normandy coast joined the protest Thursday morning, gathering their fleet off the Jersey port of St. Helier.

He said the protest over licenses for French fishermen was not an attempt to blockade the port.

"This isn't an act of war," Rogoff said in a phone interview. "It's an act of protest." Jersey fisherman John Dearing said the scene off St. Helier was "like an invasion."

"It was quite a sight," he

told British news agency PA. "It was impressive, I looked from the shore this morning and it was just like a sea of red lights and flares already going off at sea."

French authorities said the patrol vessels were there to assist in any maritime emergencies. "We would thus be capable of intervening rapidly should the situation worsen, which is not the case at the moment," they said in an emailed statement to The Associated Press. The 50-boat French

flotilla later dispersed peacefully after wrapping up its protest, French authorities said. The British government said its two navy vessels "would remain in place to monitor the situation as a precautionary measure." Opponents accused Prime Minister Boris Johnson of escalating the crisis, and of using the fishing spat as an Election Day stunt. The story dominated newspaper front page on Thursday, as voters go to the polls in local and regional elections in England, Scotland and Wales.

There have been numerous bouts of friction in the past between French and British fishermen. The latest dispute, the first since Britain's departure from the European Union last year, came after the island implemented new requirements that make fishermen account for their past work in Jersey waters to be eligible for a license to continue operating there.

"It clearly is an attempt at pitting fishermen against each other — I'm entitled to this, you don't have rights to that, et cetera," said Hugo Lehuby, a representative for French fishermen in Normandy. "It really is a provocation from Jersey." □

China rejects G-7 criticism on human rights

BEIJING (AP) — China's government on Thursday rejected criticism of its human rights and economic record by foreign ministers of the Group of Seven major economies and accused them of meddling in its affairs.

The Foreign Ministry also rejected an appeal by the G-7 diplomats for Taiwan, the island democracy Beijing claims as part of its territory, to be allowed to participate in the World Health Organization.

The statement Wednesday by G-7 diplomats in London "made groundless accusations" said a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin.

He accused them of "blatantly meddling" in China's affairs. "China strongly condemns it," Wang said at a press briefing.

The officials from the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada said they were "deeply concerned" about Beijing's treatment of Uyghur and other minorities. But they announced no formal joint action in response to reports of mass detentions, forced labor and forced sterilization.

The Biden administration wants to assemble a coalition to respond to China's economic and strategic assertiveness. But some European governments

are more cautious about dealing with the government of an important export market.

Beijing rejects complaints that it mistreats minorities and says camps in Xinjiang are for job training to promote economic development and combat radicalism among the western region's predominantly Muslim population.

China also was irked that G-7 governments for the first time unanimously recommended Taiwan be allowed "meaningful participation" in the WHO. Wednesday's statement cited Taiwan's success in controlling the coronavirus.



Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, left, poses for a photo with his German counterpart Heiko Maas ahead of bi-lateral talks during the G7 foreign ministers' meeting in London, Wednesday, May 5, 2021.

Associated Press

The communist Beijing government says Taiwan, which split with the mainland in 1949 after a civil war, has no right to conduct foreign relations or participate in global bodies as a sovereign government.

"Taiwan's participation in international organizations, including the activities of the World Health Organization, which is composed of sovereign states, must be handled in accordance with the one-China principle," Wang said. □

U.N. says 155 million people faced severe hunger last year

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — At least 155 million people faced acute hunger in 2020, including 133,000 who needed urgent food to prevent widespread death from starvation — and the outlook for 2021 is equally grim or worse, a report by 16 organizations said Wednesday.

The report, which focuses on 55 countries that account for 97% of humanitarian assistance, said the magnitude and severity of food crises last year worsened as a result of protracted conflicts, the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, and weather extremes that exacerbated “pre-existing fragilities.” The 155 million people faced “crisis,” “emergency” or “catastrophe/famine” levels of food needs, an increase of around 20 million people from 2019, it said.

According to the report, two-thirds of the people in those crisis levels were in 10 countries — Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, northern Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe and Haiti. The 133,000 facing starvation, death and destitution were in Burkina



In this May 10, 2009 file photo, a man carries a sack of wheat distributed to poor displaced families, distributed by World Food Program with the cooperation of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the United States Agency for International Development, in Kandahar Afghanistan.

Faso, South Sudan and Yemen.

“The number of people facing acute food insecurity and requiring urgent food, nutrition and livelihoods assistance is on the rise,” U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres wrote in the forward to the 307-page

Global Report on Food Crises.

“There is no place for famine and starvation in the 21st century,” he said. “We need to tackle hunger and conflict together to solve either.”

Arif Husain, the World Food Program’s chief economist,

said at a U.N. news conference for the release of the fifth annual report that the biggest driver of food crises is conflict, which accounted for 99 million people in 23 countries facing a food crisis last year.

“Unless we start finding political solutions to conflicts,”

the number of people needing humanitarian assistance will keep increasing, he said.

According to the report, 40.5 million people in 17 countries faced acute food insecurity last year because of “economic shocks” including the fallout from the pandemic.

First and foremost, Husain pointed to declining incomes as a result of the 255 million jobs lost in the pandemic “four times more than the financial crisis” in 2008. He also expressed concern that the amount of debt taken on by countries large and small to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus “has exploded.”

Dominique Burgeon, director of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization’s office in Geneva, said 60% to 80% of the 155 million people facing acute food insecurity depend on agriculture, but last year FAO was able to assist only about 30%.

The report presented some other grim statistics from 2020: 75.2 million children under 5 years old living in the 55 countries were “stunted” in their growth and 15.8 million were “wasted,” or underweight for their height. □

Associated Press

Qatar finance minister arrested in corruption investigation

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Qatar’s finance minister was being questioned over alleged abuse of power and misuse of public funds in the energy-rich state after the attorney general ordered him arrested, state-run media reported Thursday. The Qatar News Agency said the attorney general had ordered Ali Sharif al-Emadi detained but did not provide other details about the graft case involving the minister, who has held the post since 2013.

The statement said authorities had launched an investigation into “crimes related to the public sector,” but did not clarify whether al-Emadi himself was fac-



In this Sept. 14, 2020 file photo, Qatar’s Finance Minister Ali Sharif al-Emadi listens during the third annual U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue at the State Dept. in Washington.

Associated Press

ing any charges. Al-Emadi could not be immediately reached for comment.

Al-Emadi rose to prominence in the Gulf Arab emirate of Qatar after overseeing the growth of Qatar National Bank into

the largest lender in the Middle East. He also serves as chairman of the bank, on the board of Qatar’s sovereign wealth fund and as president of the executive board of long-haul carrier Qatar Airways. Ac-

cording to the Las Vegas-based Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, the Qatar Investment Authority holds assets of \$295 billion.

Last year, The Banker magazine, a prominent British-based financial publication, named al-Emadi “best minister” in Middle East and North Africa, citing his deft navigation of various crises, including the pandemic-induced collapse in demand for oil and natural gas and the yearslong boycott of the state by Gulf Arab neighbors. Arrests of such a high-ranking officials on suspicion of corruption are rare in Qatar. Corruption remains rampant in Gulf Arab sheikhdoms flush with petrodollars and

in the wider Middle East. In its 2020 corruption perceptions index, which surveys economic experts about the perceived level of public sector corruption, corruption watchdog Transparency International listed Qatar among the least corrupt in the region, with a score of 63 out of 100. The scale ranks countries between zero, which is “highly corrupt,” and 100, for “very clean.”

Qatar, a country of 2.8 million people, is preparing to open its doors to 1.5 million soccer fans next year as the host of the 2022 World Cup. The tiny state is overseeing massive national infrastructure projects worth hundreds of billions of dollars for the event. □

In major move, South Africa to end captive lion industry

By GERALD IMRAY

Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) —

South Africa says it will end its captive lion industry in a major move for conservation that would outlaw the heavily criticized "canned hunting" of the big cats and sale of their bones, as well as popular tourist experiences like petting cubs. The policy, which still needs to be made into law, would effectively end the world's legal lion bone trade. South Africa is the only country given a special dispensation by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species to sell and export lion bones, claws and teeth, and they have to be from captive lions. None of those parts from wild lions can be sold or traded anywhere. South Africa's announcement was praised by wildlife groups that want to see the iconic species left to live in the wild or in recognized conservation parks. They say the captive lion business in South Africa has been marked by disregard for the animals' welfare in favor of profit.



In this photo supplied by Blood Lions a couple of sub adult lions are held at a captive tourism facility in South Africa Sept 9, 2019.

Lions are kept in unhealthy and unethical conditions, conservationists say, and bred to ultimately be killed and their parts sold for trophies or for use in traditional medicines in Asia. South Africa had made "a courageous decision" to

end it, said Dr. Neil D'Cruze, the head of wildlife research at World Animal Protection. "This is no longer viewing the animals as commodities and how you can profit from them." The new policy will prohibit the keeping and breeding of lions in captivity and the

use of any captive lion parts for commercial purposes. South Africa has anywhere between 8,000 and 12,000 lions in captivity, according to various figures from the government and wildlife organizations. It's the only country doing "intense breeding of lions," said Neil

Associated Press

Greenwood of the International Fund for Animal Welfare. South Africa's policy change was announced by Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Barbara Creecy on Sunday after a yearlong study by a panel of experts. They recommended the industry be ended as it had a "negative impact" on conservation and on the country's ecotourism image.

Wildlife experts, while happy with the policy, foresee a complicated process of shutting down an industry that has burgeoned into a multi-million dollar operation. And what will happen to the lions?

Government figures say there are around 8,000 captive lions, but Dr. Louise de Waal of the Blood Lions organization said their research showed between 10,000 and 12,000 in more than 450 facilities.

There are around 3,000 lions in the wild or conservation parks in South Africa, de Waal said, showing how the focus had become skewed toward breeding them in captivity. □

Rio: At least 25 deaths during a police operation in a slum

By MARCELO SILVA DE SOUSA

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Police targeting drug traffickers raided a slum in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday and at least one officer and 24 suspect died of gunfire, authorities said.

A police helicopter flew low over the Jacarezinho favela as heavily armed men fled police by leaping from roof to roof, according to images shown on local television. Service on a subway line was temporarily suspended "due to intense shooting in the region," according to a statement from the company that operates it. Jacarezinho, one of the city's most populous favelas, with some 40,000 residents, is dominated by the Comando Vermelho, one of Brazil's leading criminal organizations. The police consider Jacarezinho to be one of the group's headquarters.

Thursday's operation was aimed at investigating the recruitment of teenagers to hijack trains and commit other crimes, police said in a statement.

The said the criminal gang has a "warlike structure of soldiers equipped with rifles, grenades, bulletproof vests, pistols, camouflaged clothing and other military accessories."

The Candido Mendes University's Public Safety Observatory said that at least 12 police operations in Rio state this year have resulted in three or more deaths. □



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Arubig becomes a reality

ORANJESTAD - The Minister of Tourism, Health and Sports, Mr. Dangui Oduber, announced that after 3 years of hard work, Aruba can finally enact the country decrees that regulate the accreditation institutions and the educational criteria that recognize regional organizations for medical education.

In addition to the BIG registration of the Netherlands, these national decrees regulate that Aruba can recognize accredited medical specializations such as:

- Sistema Nacional de Acreditacion de la Educacion Superior (SINAES) in Costa Rica;
- Consejo Nacional de Acreditacion (CNA) in Colombia;
- Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) in the US;

- Medical Council of Canada (MCC) in Canada.

Other national decrees that will take effect from May 15, 2021, regulate the education criteria based on principles that are similar to those in Canada and the Netherlands and that have exchange programs. After a full investigation, the following medical universities were found that meet the criteria:

- Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR);
- Universidad de Ciencias Medicas (UCIMED);
- Universidad Latina de Costa Rica.
- The following Colombian universities that also meet the criteria are:
 - Universidad El Bosque;
 - Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.

The professions in the medi-

cal sector that can start their registration in the next 3 months are doctors, pharmacists, midwives and physiotherapists as indicated in this national decree. The process for dentists is still ongoing and will eventually be regulated and implemented. This development creates new opportunities and creates more resilience in healthcare. With this development, the government fulfills the vision to get Aruban medical professionals back to work in Aruba to strengthen the healthcare sector.

In addition, this development will create new opportunities for the local professionals to specialize in Aruba through agreements offered by accredited institutions such as the Netherlands School of Public and Occupational Health (NSPOH).

The minister is grateful to his entire team, the Directorate of Public Health (DVG), the Public Health Inspectorate and all stakeholders within the healthcare sector for the realization of this project. □



Aruba to me.....



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

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For today we received a wonderful picture from **Luis Enrique Ramirez Piña**. He wrote:

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Aruba Today invites you to portrait that special mother figure in your life this **Mother's day**

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Book 'The Mysterious Virus' by local author Benjamin Romero

ORANJESTAD - Author Benjamin Romero recently published his third book entitled 'The Mysterious Virus'.

As the author said, this book is close to his heart and means a lot to him. A creation with a topical subject, a situation in which we all live. The pandemic that brought the world to its knees. In his book he deals with many aspects and developments of this virus. The author emphasized the human aspect, the good and bad sides, with the help of the characters. He also discussed the morality and other values he put forward in this book. It took the author about a year to complete this book, closely following the developments of the pandemic and indi-



vidual and community responses. Romero describes his most recent book as a short novel with a fiction dimension, but, given his journalistic background, it also contains some realistic parts that sometimes intertwine.

The author gave two copies of the book Mysterious Virus to the director of the national library, Ms. Astrid Britten, to add to the library's book collection. The library will soon be able to lend copies.

About the author

Benjamin Romero was born on May 9, 1963. He went to school and university in Colombia. He graduated as a social communication expert and journalist from the



University de La Sabana in Santa Fe de Bogota, Colombia. After graduation, Benjamin returned to his native Aruba where he has been working for the press for the past 25 years. He is currently employed by Bon Dia Aruba newspaper as a journalist and editor. □

Honoring loyal visitors from Germany

EAGLE BEACH — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The Distinguished visitor certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were the lovely Mr. Christian & Mrs. Martha Rehaag from Hamburg, Germany.

This lovely couple stated

that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches, its safety, the exceptional treatment at the Bucuti and Tara Beach Resort, Aruba's warm and friendly people whom became like family to them. Richardson together with the representatives of the Bucuti and Tara Beach Resort presented the certificate to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □





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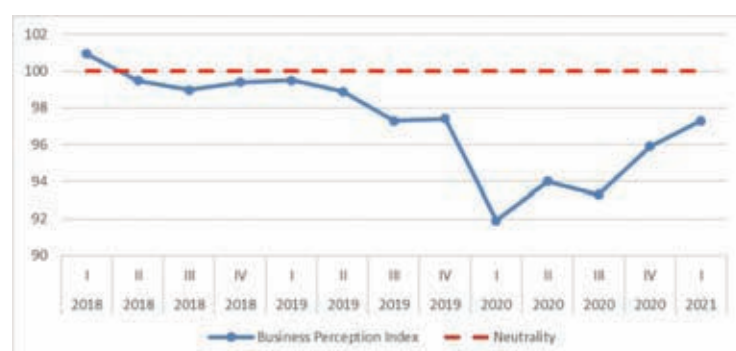
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ORANJESTAD — The Central Bank of Aruba (CBA) recently concluded its Business Perception Survey (BPS) for the first quarter of 2021. The BPS assesses the economic perceptions and sentiments of local businesses, as well as the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic conditions and business activities.

The Business Perception Index (BPI), comprising the current and short-term economic conditions, grew by 1.4 index points to 97.3 during the first quarter of 2021. The overall BPI remains below 100, despite a further improvement in business sentiments, compared to last quarter (See Chart 1).

The boost in business sentiments resulted from a battlement in both current and short-term future economic conditions.

The current economic condition index noted an expansion of 0.3 index point to 93.7, up from 93.4 in the fourth quarter of 2020. The short-term future economic condition index strengthened by 1.6 index points, i.e., from 101.1 in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 102.7 in the first quarter of 2021. The percentage of respondents expecting positive economic growth in the next 12 months grew substantially, i.e., by 10.8 percentage points to 26.5 percent. In terms of the impact of

Business sentiment improve again for a third time in a row in the first quarter of 2021

Results for the first quarter of the year 2021

the COVID-19 pandemic, the expanded Business Perception Survey also assessed the expected impact on business sales, the need for applying for emergency business funds, and the anticipated economic

recovery period. More than 40 percent of the respondents (44.7 percent) pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on their business sales, i.e., 0.7 percentage

point more compared to the fourth quarter.

The complete report of the Business Perception Survey is available on the website of the CBA (<https://www.cbaruba.org/>).

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U.S. unemployment claims fall to a pandemic low of 498,000

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans seeking unemployment aid fell last week to 498,000, the lowest point since the viral pandemic struck 14 months ago and a sign of the job market's growing strength as businesses reopen and consumers step up spending.

Thursday's report from the Labor Department showed that applications declined 92,000 from a revised 590,000 a week earlier. The number of weekly jobless claims — a rough measure of the pace of layoffs — has declined significantly from a peak of 900,000 in January as employers have ramped up hiring.

At the same time, the pace of applications is still well above the roughly 230,000 level that prevailed before the viral outbreak tore through the economy in March of last year.

As vaccinations have been more widely administered, restrictions on businesses have gradually lifted and consumers have become more willing to travel, shop and dine out, stronger spending has boosted hiring, slowed layoffs and accelerated growth. The economy grew last quarter at a vigorous 6.4% annual rate, with expectations that the current quarter will be even better.

The rapid turnaround has led many businesses, espe-



A sign announcing they are hiring hangs in the window of a restaurant in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan in New York, Tuesday, May 4, 2021.

Associated Press

cially restaurants and others in the hospitality industry, to complain that they can't find enough workers to fill open jobs. Some other employers are raising pay to attract applicants. Pointing to the \$300-a-week federal jobless check that was included in a \$1.9 trillion rescue package enacted in March, some employers have complained that some unemployed people can receive more money from jobless aid than from a job.

The complaints have led Gov. Greg Gianforte to announce that Montana would stop issuing the federal unemployment pay-

ments at the end of June. Instead, the state will use some of the federal money to pay \$1,200 bonuses to unemployed workers who take jobs. Montana's unemployment rate has fallen to 3.8%. About 30,000 people are receiving jobless aid in Montana.

Other states are ending a pandemic-era exemption to long-standing rules that required aid recipients to show that they were looking for jobs in order to keep receiving unemployment. That requirement was suspended during the pandemic but has recently been reinstated in Florida and New Hampshire.

Andrew Stettner, a senior fellow at the Century Foundation, disputed the notion that unemployment benefits are dissuading many people from taking jobs. He noted that jobless claims are declining faster in states where hiring is strong, indicating that many of the new hires had previously been receiving unemployment aid.

"It will take many months of economic recovery, vaccine progress and rebuilding of the child care infrastructure before (many unemployed) are able to find suitable work," Stettner said. "Until then, enhanced unemployment benefits will

not only sustain jobless families, but continue to power a robust recovery through greater consumer spending."

"In other words," Stettner said, "when the labor market recovers and job opportunities abound, workers will exit (unemployment) benefits for available jobs." In March, employers added nearly 1 million jobs, the most since August. Roughly the same number is expected to be reported Friday when the government issues the jobs report for April. Even so, the economy will still be more than 7 million jobs short of its pre-pandemic level.

The government's report Thursday showed that about 16.2 million people were continuing to collect unemployment benefits in the week that ended April 17, down from 16.6 million in the previous week. That's a sign that some former recipients have found jobs.

As economic growth has accelerated, sales of vehicles and newly built homes have soared, manufacturing output has risen and Americans on average have increased their savings and wealth. In part, this is because of \$1,400 stimulus checks that were distributed to most adults and in part because many affluent households have built up savings while working from home and have benefited from a surging stock market. □

Nintendo profits boom as people stuck at home play games

By **YURI KAGEYAMA**

AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Nintendo Co.'s profit for the fiscal year that ended in March jumped 86% on healthy sales of its Switch handheld machine as people stayed home due to the pandemic, turning to video games for entertainment.

Annual profit for the Japanese maker of Super Mario and Pokemon games totaled a record 480.4 billion yen (\$4.4 billion), up from 258.6 billion yen the year before. The results, released Thursday, were better than the company's internal

profit forecast of 400 billion yen (\$3.7 billion).

Sales rose 34% to 1.76 trillion yen (\$16 billion), the company said.

In game software sales, demand remained strong for "Animal Crossing: New Horizons," with 20.85 million units sold for cumulative sales of 32.6 million units. "Mario Kart 8 Deluxe" and "Ring Fit Adventure" also were popular.

Kyoto-based Nintendo said digital downloads for the Switch also did well, helping to support its bottom line.

But Nintendo said it didn't

expect such good fortune to persist through the current fiscal year, which ends in March 2022. It is forecasting a 29% drop in profit to 340 billion yen (\$3 billion). Nintendo said it has attractive games in the works, including a collaboration in the mobile sector with Niantic on an application featuring Pikmin for smart devices. It expects to release that in the second half of 2021.

Other software titles planned for global release later this year include "Mario Golf: Super Rush," and "The Legend of Zelda: Sky-



In this Jan. 23, 2020, file photo, Nintendo characters, including Mario, right, are seen on a glass of its official store in Tokyo.

Associated Press

ward Sword HD." A new Pokemon game is planned

for late 2021, according to Nintendo. □

Nature at its craziest: Trillions of cicadas about to emerge

By SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer
COLUMBIA, Md. (AP) — Sifting through a shovel load of dirt in a suburban backyard, Michael Raupp and Paula Shrewsbury find their quarry: a cicada nymph. And then another. And another. And four more.

In maybe a third of a square foot of dirt, the University of Maryland entomologists find at least seven cicadas -- a rate just shy of a million per acre. A nearby yard yielded a rate closer to 1.5 million.

And there's much more afoot. Trillions of the red-eyed black bugs are coming, scientists say.

Within days, a couple weeks at most, the cicadas of Brood X (the X is the Roman numeral for 10) will emerge after 17 years underground. There are many broods of periodic cicadas that appear on rigid schedules in different years, but this is one of the largest and most noticeable. They'll be in 15 states from Indiana to Georgia to New York; they're coming out now in mass numbers in Tennessee and North Carolina.

When the entire brood emerges, backyards can look like undulating waves, and the bug chorus is lawn-mower loud.

The cicadas will mostly come out at dusk to try to avoid everything that wants to eat them, squiggling out of holes in the



An adult cicada rests after shedding its nymphal skin, on the bark of an oak tree early Wednesday, May 5, 2021, on the University of Maryland campus in College Park, Md.
Associated Press

ground. They'll try to climb up trees or anything vertical, including Raupp and Shrewsbury. Once off the ground, they shed their skins and try to survive that vulnerable stage before they become dinner to a host of critters including ants, birds, dogs, cats and Raupp.

It's one of nature's weirdest events, featuring sex, a race against death, evolution and what can sound like a bad science fiction movie soundtrack.

Some people may be repulsed. Psychiatrists are calling entomologists worrying about their patients,

Shrewsbury said. But scientists say the arrival of Brood X is a sign that despite pollution, climate change and dramatic biodiversity loss, something is still right with nature. And it's quite a show.

Raupp presents the narrative of cicada's lifespan with all the verve of a Hollywood blockbuster: "You've got a creature that spends 17 years in a COVID-like existence, isolated underground sucking on plant sap, right? In the 17th year these teenagers are going to come out of the earth by the billions if not trillions. They're going to try to best everything on the planet that wants to eat them during this critical period of the nighttime when they're just trying to grow up, they're just trying to be adults, shed that skin, get their wings, go up into the treetops, escape their predators," he says.

"Once in the treetops, hey, it's all going to be about romance. It's only the males that sing. It's going to be a big boy band up there as the males try to woo those females, try to convince that special someone that she should be the mother of his nymphs. He's going to perform, sing songs. If she likes it, she's going to click her wings. They're going to have some wild sex in the

treetop.

"Then she's going to move out to the small branches, lay their eggs. Then it's all going to be over in a matter of weeks. They're going to tumble down. They're going to basically fertilize the very plants from which they were spawned. Six weeks later the tiny nymphs are going to tumble 80 feet from the treetops, bounce twice, burrow down into the soil, go back underground for another 17 years."

"This," Raupp says, "is one of the craziest life cycles of any creature on the planet." America is the only place in the world that has periodic cicadas that stay underground for either 13 or 17 years, says entomologist John Cooley of the University of Connecticut.

The bugs only emerge in large numbers when the ground temperature reaches 64 degrees. That's happening earlier in the calendar in recent years because of climate change, says entomologist Gene Kritsky. Before 1950 they used to emerge at the end of May; now they're coming out weeks earlier.

Though there have been some early bugs in Maryland and Ohio, soil temperatures have been in the low 60s. So Raupp and other scientists believe the big emergence is days away --

a week or two, max.

Cicadas who come out early don't survive. They're quickly eaten by predators. Cicadas evolved a key survival technique: overwhelming numbers. There's just too many of them to all get eaten when they all emerge at once, so some will survive and reproduce, Raupp says.

This is not an invasion. The cicadas have been here the entire time, quietly feeding off tree roots underground, not asleep, just moving slowly waiting for their body clocks tell them it is time to come out and breed. They've been in America for millions of years, far longer than people.

When they emerge, it gets noisy 105 decibels noisy, like "a singles bar gone horribly, horribly wrong," Cooley says. There are three distinct cicada species and each has its own mating song.

They aren't locusts and the only plants they damage are young trees, which can be netted. The year after a big batch of cicadas, trees actually do better because dead bugs serve as fertilizer, Kritsky says.

People tend to be scared of the wrong insects, says University of Illinois entomologist May Berenbaum. The mosquito kills more people than any other animals because of malaria and other diseases. Yet some people really dread the cicada emergence, she said.

"I think it's the fact that they're an inconvenience. Also, when they die in mass numbers they smell bad," Berenbaum says. "They really disrupt our sense of order."

But others are fond of cicadas and even munch on them, using recipes like those in a University of Maryland cookbook. And for scientists like Cooley, there is a real beauty in their life cycle.

"This is a feel-good story, folks. It really is and it's in a year we need more," he says. "When they come out, it's a great sign that forests are in good shape. All is as it is supposed to be." □

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

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3							8	1
	9		3		5		7	
	1		9		8		4	
7	2							6
			4		6	5		
		8				3		

NY: Broadband cos paid for 8.5M fake net neutrality comments



In this Aug. 6, 2020 file photo, New York State Attorney General Letitia James takes a question at a news conference in New York.

Associated Press

By TALI ARBEL
AP Technology Writer

The Office of the New York Attorney General said in a new report that a campaign funded by the broadband industry submitted millions of fake comments supporting the 2017 repeal of net neutrality. The Federal Communications Commission's contentious 2017 repeal undid Obama-era rules that barred internet service providers from slowing or blocking websites and apps or charging companies more for faster speeds to consumers. The industry had sued to stop these rules before they were repealed but lost.

The proceeding generated a record-breaking number of comments more than 22 million and nearly 18 million were fake, the attorney general's office found. It has long been known that the tally included fake comments. One 19-year-old in California submitted more than 7.7 million pro-net neutrality comments. The attorney general's office did not identify the origins of another "distinct group" of more than 1.6 million pro-net neutrality comments, many of which used mailing addresses outside the U.S. The goal of the broadband industry campaign, according to internal documents the attorney gen-

eral's office received, was to make it seem like there was "widespread grassroots support" for the repeal of net neutrality that could give the FCC chairman at the time, Ajit Pai, "volume and intellectual cover" for the repeal. The agency is supposed to use the comments it receives, from industry and public-industry groups and the public, to shape how it makes its rules. The FCC did not immediately answer how or if it has changed its commenting process, but the acting chairwoman, Jessica Rosenworcel, said in a prepared statement that "widespread prob-

lems with the record" of the 2017 proceedings "was troubling at the time" and the agency has to learn and improve the commenting process.

The fake comments had high-profile victims. In 2018, two senators, Democrat Jeff Merkley of Oregon and Republican Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, said their identities were stolen to file fake comments for the net neutrality proceeding. "We were among those whose identities were misused to express viewpoints we do not hold," they wrote to the FCC's then-chairman, Pai, asking him to investigate the fake comments. □



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Comic strip artists band together for a silly and good cause

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fans of newspaper comics will instantly notice something missing in many of the strips this Friday — pants.

More than 25 cartoonists behind strips from “Blondie” to “Zippy the Pinhead” are celebrating the quirky holiday No Pants Day in a way that helps charities get clothing to those in need.

Participating artists are drawing their characters without trousers and urging readers to donate clothing to thrift and second-hand stores hard-hit by COVID-19.

“This was a great way to help bring communities together but also have a little bit of a laugh,” said Tea Fougner, comics editor at King Features Syndicate. “Just the idea of No Pants Day, I think, is something that everybody can feel a little bit closer to this year than in previous years.”

No Pants Day, held on the first Friday in May, is believed to have been started by a group of students at

the University of Texas who thought leaving the pants at home on the first Friday in May would be a fun way to end the semester. A winter spin-off was created called No Pants Subway Ride.

Comics creators have noticed that the COVID-19 pandemic has effected people’s ability to get clothing and charities have not gotten as many donations as typical.

In a gracious move among comic strip distributors, King Features reached out to fellow syndicators Tribune Content Agency, Andrews McMeel Universal and Washington Post Writers Group to pull off Friday’s event. “We may be business competitors, but we’re all part of the same family,” said Fougner. “We all love comics and we love our communities. And, at the end of the day, that’s really what cartooning is about. So we want as many cartoonists as possible to take part in initiatives like this.”

Cartoonists were contacted in February about the project, and the finished



This image released by Kings Features shows a frame from the Dennis The Menace comic strip promoting No Pants Day.

Associated Press

comics started to come in by March. In some cases, artists needed a quick brainstorming session to figure out ways to approach the request.

Not Bill Griffith, the artist behind “Zippy the Pinhead.” “He emailed me back right

away and he said, ‘Well, not wearing pants is Zippy’s thing,’” said Fougner.

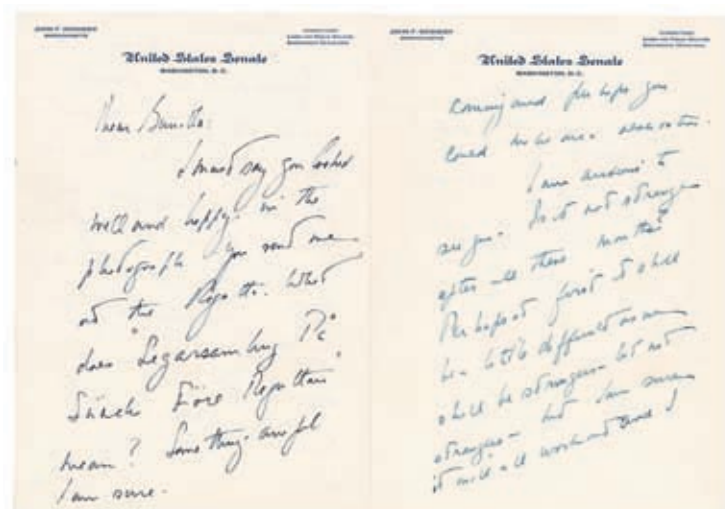
Organizers left it up to the individual cartoonists — some other participating strips include “Shoe,” “Arctic Circle,” “Hi and Lois,” “Rhymes with Orange,”

“Mallard Fillmore” and “Sally Forth” — how to incorporate the message. The strips range from medieval knights to modern office workers, all sporting underwear. “You’ll see a variety from some cartoonists who took a really direct approach where they have their characters in the comic donating clothing to people,” said Fougner. “And some folks just depicted the characters not wearing pants or put a little happy No Pants Day message in the comic.”

Olive Brinker’s “Rae the Doe” has a character donating clothes at an LGBT center while “Dennis the Menace” urges readers: “Give to a charity that helps people in need of clothing, like Room to Grow.”

The event is the latest attempt by the comics community to help society. Last year, more than 70 comic strips and panels banded together to hide six symbols in the artwork to honor workers on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic. □

‘Anxious to see you:’ JFK letters to Swedish lover auctioned



This photo shows a love letter that John F. Kennedy wrote to a Swedish paramour a few years after he married Jacqueline Bouvier, according to Boston-based RR Auction.

Associated Press

By **WILLIAM J. KOLE**

Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Love letters that John F. Kennedy wrote to a Swedish paramour a few years after he married Jacqueline Bouvier are going up for auction.

“You are wonderful and I miss you,” Kennedy scribbled at the end of a February 1956 letter to aristocrat

Gunilla von Post, whom he’d met on the French Riviera a few weeks before he wed Bouvier in 1953.

Kennedy was a Democratic U.S. senator from Massachusetts at the time, and the handwritten letters were written on Senate letterhead. He signed one simply: “Jack.”

The letters, placed up for

online bidding by Boston-based RR Auction through May 12, underscore the 35th president’s reputation as a womanizer long before he won the White House in 1960. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

Von Post, who died in 2011 in Palm Beach, Florida, wrote a 1997 memoir, “Love, Jack,” about her relationship with Kennedy.

A 1955 letter began: “Dear Gunilla, I must say you looked well and happy in the photograph you sent me at the Regatta.” Kennedy then sketched out his plans to head to Europe after Congress recessed early in August of that year, writing: “I shall be in Sweden on the 12th. Where do I go. Send me your address at Bastaad where you shall be.”

In the 1956 letter, Kennedy expressed regret that von Post wouldn’t be traveling to the U.S. as he’d hoped.

“I must say I was sad to learn that, after all, you are not coming to the U.S.,” he wrote.

“If you don’t marry come over as I should like to see you. I had a wonderful time last summer with you. It is a bright memory of my life,” Kennedy wrote. “I am anxious to see you. Is it not strange after all these months? Perhaps at first it shall be a little difficult as we shall be strangers — but not strangers — and I am sure it will all work and I shall think that though it is a long way to Gunilla — it is worth it.”

“This is the only Kennedy letter that we have offered that displays open affection to another woman while he was married,” the auction house said in a statement.

In her memoir, von Post recounted Kennedy’s efforts to end his marriage to Bouvier and bring her to the U.S. In the end, the

future president’s hopes of doing that were thwarted by his authoritarian father, Joseph P. Kennedy; JFK’s own political ambitions; and the future first lady’s 1955 miscarriage and 1956 pregnancy.

Von Post and Kennedy saw each other only one other time: a chance encounter at a gala at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City in 1958, when the Swede was pregnant with her first child.

The letters being auctioned off originated from von Post’s estate, RR Auction said. □

8	7	4	6	9	1	2	3	5
1	5	2	8	3	7	9	6	4
3	6	9	5	4	2	7	8	1
4	9	6	3	1	5	8	7	2
2	8	3	7	6	4	1	5	9
5	1	7	9	2	8	6	4	3
7	2	5	1	8	3	4	9	6
9	3	1	4	7	6	5	2	8
6	4	8	2	5	9	3	1	7

Difficulty Level ★★ ★

5/07

NASCAR returns to roots with sleek new pony cars for 2022

By JENNA FRYER AP

Auto Racing Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) —

Chase Elliott, Joey Logano and Denny Hamlin drove their sporty new pony cars through the smoke and lights of the fog machines NASCAR used for its first fancy presentation in more than a year.

The future of the sport is riding on the Next Gen car unveiled Wednesday in a darkened Charlotte auditorium, where the movers and shakers of NASCAR gathered to get the first look at the new Chevrolet Camaro, Ford Mustang and Toyota Camry.

Never before had all of NASCAR's stakeholders collaborated on one project for the sake of the sport, all putting personal interests aside for the sake of competition, cost containment and manufacturer relevance.

"Chevrolet wants to have a competitive car on track. But equally as much, we want to have a car that aligns itself with something somebody can go buy on a showroom floor," Elliott said.

City Chevrolet, the dealership that launched Hall of Fame team owner Rick Hendrick's career, sat just three miles up the road from the unveiling with a car lot full of street-legal Camaros. If the Next Gen works, viewers will watch



NASCAR unveils the Next Gen Cup cars for the 2022 season during the NASCAR media event in Charlotte, N.C., Wednesday, May 5, 2021.

a race then head to their nearest dealership to buy a car.

"That's always been an important part of the sport, an important part of NASCAR — 'Win on Sunday, sell on Monday.' Now that we've got more relevance, anybody that wants to go buy a Mustang, it just resonates even more for them," said Mark Rushbrook, global director at Ford Performance Motorsports.

NUTS AND BOLTS

The Next Gen was first proposed in 2018 and initially scheduled to be on track this season. It was postponed a year by the pandemic and now won't get on track until next February when the season opens

at Daytona International Speedway.

NASCAR didn't want to delay the project because it has so much hope tied into the Next Gen car. But it impossible to maintain an on-track testing schedule during the early part of the pandemic and NASCAR ran into difficulties obtaining the parts needed to complete the development of the cars.

COST CONTAINMENT

There is no spending cap in NASCAR and the deep-pocketed teams win races because they have the resources that small teams do not.

The Next Gen is designed to create parity and give the little guys a fighting chance

on the track.

Single-source manufacturers will build the chassis, provide parts and supply the carbon composite bodies for the first time in NASCAR's 73-year history. It means all the parts and pieces will come from the same vendors and each team can have only seven cars at a time instead of an unlimited fleet.

Although there have been 10 winners through 11 races this season, only one is from an underdog team: Michael McDowell beat 100-1 odds to win the Daytona 500.

Spire Motorsports eyed the Next Gen model and believed it would change the odds for smaller teams.

Spire bought its first charter to enter Cup competition before the 2019 season and now has three of the 36 guaranteed starting spots each week in the 40-car field. Rick Ware Racing owns three and a share of a fourth.

Interest is so high that a bidding war ensued last summer when three new teams chased charters. When Spire bought its first charter, it wasn't an agency, not a race team, and only bought it because no one else was interested.

BETTER COMPETITION

The Next Gen is supposed to make the racing better throughout the field based on changes to how the car is built.

The car is designed to give drivers greater control and put an emphasis back on race strategy, team personnel and vehicle setup. The symmetric body shape significantly reduces sideforce, which in theory should make the cars harder to drive through corners — NASCAR's current car is offset, not symmetric.

The composite body is designed to minimize in-race damage that would otherwise affect handling and lead to further incidents that could alter a race.

And the new, wider tires are designed to allow Goodyear to bring a softer compound to improve passing and strategy options. □

U.S. women to play Summer Series in Texas ahead of Olympics

By ANNE M. PETERSON

AP Sports Writer

The U.S. women's national team will play Portugal, Jamaica and Nigeria during a five-match Summer Series next month in Texas.

U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski will use the matches as a final evaluation before he names an 18-player Olympic roster. The United States also plans to play two as-yet unannounced Tokyo sendoff matches in July.

Andonovski said in a video conference with reporters Thursday that he plans to call up 24 players for the

Texas matches.

"It is very important that we start synchronizing our lines and the players that are going to play together, or we believe are going to play the majority of the minutes, in the Olympics," he said.

"So we're going to try to get some of those players a little bit more minutes, but there will be players that we're probably going to have to see one last time before we announce the roster as well."

The Summer Series is not a tournament and no standings will be kept. The

matches will be treated as friendlies, with the United States and Nigeria each playing three matches, and Portugal and Jamaica playing two apiece. The United States is the only team in the group headed to the Tokyo Games this summer.

Four matches will be played on June 10 and June 13 in Houston. The new Q2 Stadium in Austin will host a match June 16 between the U.S. and Nigeria, the first time the two teams have met outside an international competition. The game will also be the



In this Sunday, Nov. 10, 2019 file photo, United States defender Alana Cook (29) passes the ball during the first half of an international friendly soccer match against Costa Rica, in Jacksonville, Fla.

Associated Press

first soccer match held at Q2, the home of Major League Soccer expansion

club Austin FC. Austin FC will play its first game in the stadium three days later. □

Slugger Albert Pujols designated for assignment by Angels

By **GREG BEACHAM**

AP Sports Writer

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Albert Pujols was designated for assignment by the Los Angeles Angels on Thursday, abruptly ending the 41-year-old superstar slugger's decade with his second major league team. The Angels announced the move a day after Pujols wasn't in their lineup for the slumping club's fourth consecutive loss. He was in the final season of a 10-year, \$240 million contract with Los Angeles.

Pujols is fifth in major league history with 667 career homers, and the first baseman is 13th in major league history with 3,253 hits. A 10-time All-Star and the oldest active player in the majors, he is batting .198 this season with five homers and 12 RBIs while playing in 24 of the Angels' 29 games.

"The Angels organization proudly signed Albert Pujols in 2011, and are honored that he has worn an Angels jersey for nearly half of his Hall of Fame career," Angels owner Arte Moreno said in a statement. "Albert's historical accomplishments, both on and off the field, serve as an inspiration to athletes everywhere, and his actions define what it means to be



Los Angeles Angels Albert Pujols walks to the dugout after he was called out on strikes during the ninth inning of a baseball game against the Seattle Mariners, Sunday, May 2, 2021, in Seattle.

Associated Press

a true superstar. Since his Rookie of the Year season in 2001, Albert and his wife Deidre have generously given their time and resources to countless charities throughout the world. We are thankful to the entire Pujols family."

Pujols joined the Angels after 11 successful seasons with the St. Louis Cardinals. He won three NL MVP awards and two World Series rings in St. Louis while establishing himself as one of the greatest sluggers of his

generation.

Moreno persuaded Pujols to leave for the West Coast with a lavish contract, but the Angels have not won a playoff game during the concurrent tenures of Pujols and three-time AL MVP Mike Trout at the heart of their lineup.

The Angels made only one postseason appearance in Pujols' nine full seasons, winning the AL West title and promptly getting swept by Kansas City in 2014. The club is on skids of

five straight losing seasons and six straight non-playoff campaigns since then.

Pujols' achievements with Los Angeles have been mostly statistical, including the 500th and 600th homers and the 3,000th hit of his career.

Pujols hasn't performed at a level commensurate with his pay for many years, although Moreno knew the consequences of such a long contract. Pujols is making \$30 million in salary this season in the final year of

the deal, which includes a 10-year personal services contract with the Angels after it expires.

Pujols was in the opening day lineup for the 21st consecutive season, joining Pete Rose and Eddie Murray as the only major leaguers to reach that milestone. But he has been a below-average statistical player for the past half-decade, during which he is batting .240 with minus-2 wins above replacement. Pujols is second in major league history with 2,112 RBIs since they became an official statistic, trailing only Hank Aaron. He is fifth in doubles (669), total bases (5,955) and extra-base hits (1,352) in major league annals.

Despite his age and declining production, Pujols did not say whether this season would be his last when he reported to spring training. Moreno is no stranger to handing out lavish contracts to mid-career stars in transactions that the Angels swiftly regretted. A year after signing Pujols, Moreno gave a five-year, \$125 million deal to troubled slugger Josh Hamilton, only to trade him back to Texas two years later while eating most of the \$80 million still owed to Hamilton. □

NFL reminds teams are off the hook if injury occurs off-site



This Aug. 19, 2019, file photo shows Denver Broncos offensive tackle Ja'Wuan James (70) taking the field during an NFL preseason football game between the Denver Broncos and the San Francisco 49ers in Denver.

Associated Press

By **ARNIE STAPLETON**

AP Pro Football Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP)

— The NFL is reminding

teams following Ja'Wuan James' potentially season-ending Achilles injury that they're not obligated to

pay salaries of players who get hurt away from team facilities. The memo sent to all 32 teams Wednesday and obtained by The Associated Press was spurred by James' injury he sustained while working out at a private gym away from Broncos headquarters on Tuesday.

The league encouraged teams to "remind players of the significant injury-related protection provided if they choose to work out at the club facility and the risks they undertake in choosing to train in non-NFL locations."

Players are protected against lost wages if they sustain an injury at a team's facility. They don't

have the same protection if they're injured working out anywhere else.

Players from 20 teams, including the Broncos, are boycotting voluntary off-season workouts at team facilities over COVID-19 concerns. The league said the Broncos are off the hook for James' \$10 million salary for 2021, which would have been fully guaranteed had he gotten hurt while working out at the team's facilities.

"Injuries sustained while a player is working out 'on his own' in a location other than an NFL facility are considered 'Non-Football Injuries' and are outside the scope of a typical skill, injury and cap guaran-

tee," the memo said.

"Such injuries are also not covered by the protections found in paragraph 9 of the NFL Player Contract, meaning that clubs have no contractual obligation to provide salary continuation during the year in which the injury was sustained."

"By contrast," the memo added, "injuries sustained by a player while working out at a club facility or as specifically authorized by his club are considered 'Football-Related Injuries.' Under our agreement with the NFL Players Association, players that sustain 'Football Related Injuries' are entitled to significant protections." □